



Volume 6. Issue 7

Human and Animal Jewellery

In our *Mishnah* (12:1) we are told that the “the ring of a person is impure (meaning that it is susceptible to impurity) [while] the ring of a beast or an implement is pure (meaning that it is not susceptible to impurity)”. In other words, all jewellery made for people is susceptible to becoming impure, whereas all other jewellery or decoration is not.

The *Ikar Tosafot Yom Tov* explains that this *Mishnah* is a continuation of the law explained in *Mishnah* 8 of the previous *perek* where it is taught that a woman's jewellery may contract impurity. There, the *Bartenura* explains that the source is a *drasha* made from the following *pasuk* (*Bamidbar* 31: 23)¹:

Everything that comes into the fire, you shall pass through the fire, and it shall be clean; nevertheless it shall be purified with the water of sprinkling; **and everything** that will not pass through fire, you shall pass through water.

We deduce from the *pasuk* that discusses metalware that because the utensil is purified in water, it must be that it can become impure. However, because of the use of the words “and”, we deduce an extra inclusion beyond that which would normally require purification. Since the rule is that only useful tools made of metal may become impure, it must be there is another class of metal object which may become impure, namely, jewellery. The reason why it is only a person's jewellery which is included in the laws of ritual impurity is not clear, though, logically there should be no difference between metal decorations for people and for other things.

The answer to this question would seem to lie in an exploration of the nature of ritual impurity, or *tumah*. The Rebbe from Kotsk taught that *tumah* is simply the lack of Godliness in an object which has instead been filled up with something else. However, when it comes to the ritual impurity of objects, there is a difference, for

what we are discussing is a factor which affects our relationship with *Hashem*, however, animals and inanimate objects have no direct relationship with *Hashem*. As such, it must be that their *tumah* is different to ours. We will posit based on this that the *tumah* of an animal or inanimate object is not the absence of Godliness from the object (for such a description would have no meaning), but rather the ability to induce an absence of Godliness from our own bodies.

The second fact which we must use in explaining the difference between decorations for people and for others things is that when a person wears jewellery, he does so for himself, and similarly, when he decorates something in his control or care, he does so for himself (or at least for other people). What this tells us is that the purpose of jewellery on a person is to impact the person and is directly impacting by being worn, whereas the purpose of jewellery and decorations for animals and things is to indirectly impact people, rather than the animal or things, for what difference does it make to a cat or a pot if it is wearing a necklace? As such, there is a fundamental difference in purpose, human jewellery is meant to benefit the wearer whereas other jewellery is not.

Based on the above, it is possible to deduce an answer to the question which we asked: why is it that there is a difference between animal and human jewellery with regard to the laws of ritual impurity? The answer would seem to be that an object, whether it is practically useful or merely decorative, must be intended to directly impact human beings so as to be able to contract ritual impurity. Otherwise, the eventual impact on humans is too indirect. There is no point in its contracting ritual impurity, for the animal or the pot it is placed upon have no relationship with *Hashem* which may be affected by that contact and the impure nature of the object.

Alex Tsykin

¹ Ed note: The section of the *Torah* refers to the *kashering* of utensils discussed after the war with *Midyan*.

Revision Questions

כלים י"א: ג' – י"ב: ז'

- What is the law regarding utensils made from boards of metal and what is the concern? (י"א: ג')
- What substance is the subject of debate when used to form utensils? (י"א: ג')
- What is the law regarding a utensil formed from metal from a mixture of *tameh* and *tahur* utensils? (י"א: ד')
- What are two laws two regarding a *klustera*? (י"א: ד')
- What are the two parts of the reins that are discussed? List the three opinions regarding their susceptibility to *tumah*. (י"א: ה')
- What is a *pika* and explain the debate regarding its susceptibility to *tumah*? (י"א: ו')
- When is a flute containing metal not susceptible to *tumah*? (י"א: ו')
- When is an animal horn susceptible to *tumah*? (Provide both cases.) (י"א: ז')
- Which battle armour is susceptible to *tumah*? (י"א: ח')
- Are weapons susceptible to *tumah*? (י"א: ח')
- Is jewellery susceptible to *tumah*? (י"א: ח')
- Describe the *nezem* that if broken two parts are still susceptible to *tumah*? (י"א: ט')
- Which rings are susceptible to *tumah*? (י"א: י')
- Provide two cases when a chain is susceptible to *tumah*? (י"א: י')
- When is a *kane moznaim* of *ba'alei batim tameh*? (י"א: י')
- What is the general rule provided regarding the susceptibility to *tumah* of *uklayot*? (List some of the cases.) (י"א: י')
- Explain the debate regarding a metal covering of a *teni*? (י"א: י')
- Regarding the previous question, what case is not the subject of debate? (י"א: י')
- What case is similar to the one in the previous question? (י"א: י')
- Is a picture frame hook susceptible to *tumah*? (י"א: י')
- Is the nail in a sundial susceptible to *tumah*? (י"א: י')
- What are the other five cases involving a nail and what is the law? (י"א: י' – י')
- What are the four cases where *Rabban Gamliel* rules *tameh* and the *Chachamim* rule *tahor*? (י"א: י')
- What are the two ways an expired coin can become susceptible to *tumah*? (י"א: י')
- Is there any restriction in keeping expired coins? (י"א: י')

Local Shiurim

Sunday -Thursday

Between mincha & ma'ariv
Mizrachi Shul

Friday & Shabbat

10 minutes before mincha
Mizrachi Shul

Next Week's Mishnayot...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
5 nd April י"א ניסן	6 rd April י"ב ניסן	7 th April י"ג ניסן	8 th April י"ד ניסן	9 th April ט"ו ניסן	10 th April ט"ז ניסן	11 th April י"ז ניסן
Keilim 12:8-13:1	Keilim 13:2-3	Keilim 13:4-5	Keilim 13:6-7	Keilim 13:8-14:1	Keilim 14:2-3	Keilim 14:4-5

